



US ARMY CORPS  
OF ENGINEERS  
Rock Island District

# Information Paper

## Restructured Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study

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The Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study was restructured to incorporate recommendations from the National Research Council. The restructured study looks more holistically at the complicated inter-relationships between the environment, the navigation system and the floodplain. It will work to ensure that the waterway system continues to be a nationally treasured ecological resource, as well as an effective transportation system by seeking ways to reduce lock congestion, achieve an environmentally sustainable system, and address ecosystem and floodplain management needs related to the navigation system.

In February 2000, due to the much-publicized controversy surrounding the study, the Department of Defense (DOD) requested that the National Research Council (NRC) review study activities and provide an interim report to the DOD in February 2001. After release of the NRC review, the Corps announced a pause to the study to allow time to evaluate the comments and determine a new course of action. The Corps solicited help in this endeavor by forming a Federal Principals Task Force made up of senior members of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Maritime Administration, Department of Agriculture, and the Corps. This task force provided national-level balance and guidance on important economic and environmental issues related to the NRC recommendations. The Task Force recommendations include providing for equal consideration of planning for fish and wildlife resources, addressing the on-going effects of operating and maintaining the existing nine-foot navigation channel project, and the use of scenario based analysis in lieu of traffic forecasting.

The key foundation of the restructured study is the emphasis on collaboration among federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations. This collaboration has developed around a theme of sustainability for the river system, which is defined as, "the balance of economic, ecological, and social conditions so as to meet the current, projected, and future needs of the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS), without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." Economic sustainability will include the evaluation of navigation infrastructure improvements across a broad range of future conditions in order to maximize benefits to the region and nation. Environmental sustainability of the system will include the establishment of goals and objectives that will be formulated through the collaboration process with the stakeholders of the system. An adaptive management framework is also being developed in collaboration with the various stakeholders.

An Interim Report on the restructured feasibility study will be completed in July 2002. It will include a summary of past study activities and events, a blueprint for completing the navigation feasibility study to ensure sustainability of the system, an opportunity for stakeholder input into the study, and an evaluation of authority and policy issues. It will also include a snapshot of future scenarios that will effect export of agricultural and other products from the Midwest. Recommendations for full-scale ecosystem and navigation improvements are not likely to be included in the Interim Report since complete economic and environmental evaluations will not be completed until 2003. The report may contain interim recommendations; however, the recommendations would need to have current authority and a broad base of support from the various basin interests.